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Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 58/13, by which the Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to improve the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the requests of Member States by providing coherent and adequate support for their efforts to achieve the goals of good governance and democratization.

The report is also submitted pursuant to resolution 58/281, in which the Assembly invited the Secretary-General, Member States, the relevant specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to support and collaborate in the holding of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Doha in 2006. The report discusses, in particular, the follow-up to the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies held in Ulaanbaatar in 2003, and the preparations for the Sixth International Conference. The Secretary-General indicates in the report that he intends to initiate a study on the comparative advantages, complementarity and desirable distribution of labour of various intergovernmental democracy movements, organizations and institutes, whether global or regional, and on how the United Nations system has worked and could further work with them in a

* Owing to recent events and changes in the Secretariat related to the agenda item, the report could not be submitted at an earlier date.

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mutually supportive way. The Secretary-General proposes that the General Assembly come to a decision, taking into account all financial implications, on how to strengthen United Nations support to the Chair of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and United Nations cooperation with other relevant movements and organizations concerned with democratic governance.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolutions on new or restored democracies, starting with resolution 50/133 of 20 December 1995, the General Assembly has welcomed my reports on the ways in which the United Nations system could support the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/50/332 and Corr.1, A/51/512, A/52/513, A/53/554 and Corr.1, A/54/492, A/55/489, A/55/520, A/56/499 and A/58/392).

2. By its resolution 58/13 of 24 November 2003, the Assembly encouraged me to continue to improve the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the requests of Member States by providing coherent and adequate support for their efforts to achieve the goals of good governance and democratization. By the same resolution, the Assembly requested that I submit a report to it at its sixtieth session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request.

3. The present report starts with a description of the results of and follow-up to the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. It then reviews the preparations for the Sixth International Conference. The report includes a discussion of the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (A/59/565), of my report entitled "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005) and of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1 of 16 September 2005) insofar as they contain analysis and recommendations related to democratic processes. Finally, the report makes observations and suggestions for further consideration.

II. Follow-up to the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, on democracy, good governance and civil society

4. The Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, on democracy, good governance and civil society, was held in Ulaanbaatar from 10 to 12 September 2003. A significant number of States, 119, were represented, with a total of over 400 participants, approximately 30 of them at the ministerial or equivalent level. As described in detail in the report I submitted to the General Assembly in 2003 (A/58/392), the Conference adopted a final report and a declaration and plan of action (A/58/387, annexes I and II) by consensus.

5. The wide participation in the Ulaanbaatar Conference is a manifestation of the increasing global support for initiatives to discuss and promote democratization. The Conference went beyond the achievements of the previous ones in presenting, with increased clarity, the benchmarks for a democratic society. The Ulaanbaatar Plan of Action committed the participating Governments to draw up substantive plans for strengthening democracy at the national and regional levels and to implement those at the national, regional and international levels.

6. After the Conference, the Government of Mongolia and the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Mongolia started a project to support the follow-up to the recommendations of the Fifth International Conference and to assist Mongolia in the implementation process until the Sixth International Conference is held in Doha in 2006.

7. The specific activities that have been initiated are described below.

A. Actions taken by the Chair of the Fifth International Conference

8. Although many activities listed here are concentrated on Mongolia, it is expected that other countries will benefit from this pilot process. Furthermore, the next Conference in Qatar could discuss, in particular, how the multifaceted experience of Mongolia in the follow-up to the Fifth International Conference, as described in this section, could be expanded to cover other countries and regions.

Development of national democratic governance indicators, country information note and national plan of action on democracy

9. The outcome documents of the Fifth International Conference contain an explicit commitment by the Governments of new or restored democracies, along with their counterparts from mature democracies, to develop nationally-owned democratic governance indicators to be better able to monitor progress in democratic and social development. Accordingly, Mongolia will establish the baselines and benchmarks for the democratic process in the country.

10. The democratic governance indicators are being specifically tailored to measure progress and help Mongolian policymakers respond to priorities for policy reforms as expected by the country's citizens, especially the poor and other disadvantaged groups. The indicators are being developed by a national research team in collaboration with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and UNDP. The latter is involved in facilitating knowledge-sharing with the Philippines, the Republic of Moldova, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

11. The Government of Mongolia is also developing a national plan of action to consolidate democracy.

12. The Conference project (see para. 6 above) and the Mongolian National Statistical Office have formed a partnership to collect and systematize democratic governance data, which will help to ensure the sustainability of the democratic governance indicators exercise and the tracking of a ninth national millennium development goal on human rights and good governance adopted by the Parliament of Mongolia.

13. In an effort to promote dialogue with all stakeholders, the Government organized a State of Democracy Conference in Mongolia on 30 June and 1 July 2005. The Conference gathered over 300 participants from local and central government, Parliament and civil society, as well as other key national and international stakeholders and international experts from IDEA, Essex University and India.

14. Finally, a national research team is to conduct multiple dialogues with the public and vulnerable groups across Mongolia as part of the data collection for the democratic governance indicators. These consultations will include several surveys intended to give a voice to groups that are often marginalized in the democratic process in Mongolia, such as nomadic people, migrants, youth and the rural poor. A website of the Fifth International Conference with access in Mongolian will facilitate dissemination of information.

Strengthening Mongolia's leadership as a chair of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies

15. A national steering committee was established for the follow-up work to the Fifth International Conference. It includes high-level members from Government, Parliament, the National Human Rights Commission, civil society and the media as well as the UNDP Resident Representative. The follow-up project has also engaged the National Watch Network for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to follow up on the recommendations of the International Civil Society Forum which was held in parallel to the Fifth International Conference (see para. 20 below). A Parliamentary working group headed by the Vice-Speaker of the House has been established to follow up on the recommendations of another parallel event, the Parliamentarians' Forum.

16. The Government of Mongolia established a Friends of the Chair Group during the Conference for the purpose of implementing the decisions taken and preparing for the next Conference.

B. Parliamentarians' Forum

17. Until the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, parliaments had not been a major actor in the process of new or restored democracies. The movement had been driven essentially by Governments, and to a lesser extent by civil society. This oversight was corrected at the Fifth International Conference. The decision to involve parliaments was premised on the fact that one cannot talk about democracy, a people-driven process, without involvement of the official representatives of the people. In recognition of the prominent role played by parliaments in promoting democracy, the organizers of the Fifth International Conference decided to establish the Parliamentarians' Forum. The responsibility for organizing the Forum was entrusted to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the world organization of parliaments, and the Parliament of Mongolia as the parliament of the host country.

18. The Forum was attended by some 120 participants from 47 parliaments. The fact that the Forum was held at the same time and place as the main Conference enabled the parliamentarians to have healthy interaction with delegates from government and civil society attending the Conference.

19. The Parliamentarians' Forum at the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies was an innovation. The Conference agreed to the Forum's recommendation that it become a permanent feature of future conferences. Representatives of the parliamentary community, through IPU, are now involved in the official follow-up mechanism.

C. Civil Society Forum

20. The International Civil Society Forum on civil society partnerships for democracy was held in Ulaanbaatar immediately prior to the Fifth International Conference. The Forum brought together over 200 participants from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America to promote partnerships

and strengthen commitments to democratic governance locally, nationally and internationally.

21. At the international Civil Society Forum, participants agreed on the need for a dedicated process and mechanism to implement the outcomes of the Forum. The Declaration of the Fifth International Conference included a recommendation to the General Assembly that it strengthen its own follow-up mechanism by ensuring that it coordinates with the follow-up mechanism of the Civil Society Forum. This collaborative approach was reflected in General Assembly resolution 58/13.

22. A network of non-governmental organizations, the International Civil Society Forum for Democracy (ICSFD), facilitated the implementation of the Ulaanbataar Plan of Action as it relates to civil society. ICSFD promotes effective democratic governance reforms by strengthening civil society collaboration nationally, regionally and internationally. A regionally representative Steering Committee of ICSFD has met six times since the Forum in Mongolia. Its representatives have also made numerous contributions to regional and national forums, conferences and campaigns. An international coordinating unit in New York has facilitated ongoing relations with delegations, including the Chair of the Fifth International Conference, United Nations officials, IPU and civil society representatives who are involved in the proceedings of the Democracy Caucus and the Community of Democracies.

23. ICSFD has also begun preparations for the Sixth International Conference. It has called for a more effective follow-up process in general, among all partners (Governments, parliamentarians and civil society). In its preparations for the Conference, it is engaging civil society partners through a series of regional preparatory processes in order to strengthen the Forum's capacity to implement an anticipated programme of action following the Conference. For instance, a forum of non-governmental organizations to be held in Bahrain in November 2005 will engage Arab regional organizations in a discussion with a view of establishing a regional planning framework and a secretariat to prepare the civil society contributions to the Conference.

III. Preparations for the Sixth International Conference

24. By its resolution 58/281 of 26 April 2004, the General Assembly endorsed Qatar's offer to host the next International Conference. The Conference will be held in Doha from 30 October to 1 November 2006. The Government of Qatar has already established a mechanism to plan for and organize the Conference, including its follow-up.

25. The Friends of the Chair Group established by the Government of Mongolia (see para. 16 above) held a meeting in Santiago in April 2005 during the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Community of Democracies. This gave the two groups an opportunity to share ideas on how the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the Community of Democracies could be brought closer together.

IV. Recent proposals on strengthening United Nations support for democratic governance

26. The report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (A/59/565) made an important contribution to the discussions on the links between democratic governance and peace and security by highlighting that weak democracies breed global security challenges. The Panel stated that international terrorist groups preyed on weak States for sanctuary, and that their recruitment was aided by grievances nurtured by poverty, foreign occupation and the absence of human rights and democracy; by religious and other intolerance; and by civil violence. The Panel noted that security challenges, such as corruption, illicit trade and money-laundering, contributed to State weakness, impede economic growth and undermine democracy.

27. I truly believe that strengthening new and restored democracies, as well as respect for human rights and the rule of law, are essential both for preventing the emergence of new security threats and combating the existing ones. In my report "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), I drew attention to the commitments made by Member States in recent years to reinforce democracy and expressed my support for the creation of a democracy fund at the United Nations to provide assistance to countries seeking to establish or strengthen their democracy.

28. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), Heads of State and Government reaffirmed democracy as a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives. They also reaffirmed that, while democracies shared common features, there was no single model of democracy, and that it did not belong to any country or region.

29. The leaders renewed their commitment to support democracy by strengthening countries' capacity to implement the principles and practices of democracy and resolved to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to assist Member States upon their request. They welcomed the establishment of a Democracy Fund at the United Nations and noted that its advisory board should reflect diverse geographical representation. They invited me to help ensure that the practical arrangements for the Democracy Fund take proper account of existing United Nations activity in this field and invited interested Member States to give consideration to contributing to the Fund.

30. There is now broad recognition among Member States that democratic governance is crucial to the advancement of human development and the realization of human rights. The United Nations is already engaged in useful and effective support of democracy in a variety of ways, mainly through activities carried out by the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat , UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In my previous report to the General Assembly on new or restored democracies (A/58/392), I provided a full account of these activities. The creation of the Democracy Fund, administered by the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, was envisaged to complement the current efforts and contribute to a more coordinated approach.

31. The primary purpose of the Fund will be to support projects that consolidate and strengthen democratic institutions and facilitate democratic governance in new or restored democracies within the particular historical and cultural context of the

country and region concerned. I am now in the process of establishing an advisory board for the Fund to provide policy guidance for the development of programme frameworks and funding guidelines, and to consider and submit funding proposals for my approval.

V. Observations and recommendations

32. In its resolution 58/13, the General Assembly requested that I examine options for strengthening the support provided by the United Nations system for the efforts of Member States to consolidate democracy and good governance, including the provision of support to the President of the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in his efforts to make the Conference and its follow-up more effective and efficient.

33. **Over the years, it has been repeatedly asked how the new or restored democracies movement, now in existence for 17 years, can be strengthened or institutionalized in order to ensure much more effective follow-up to the recommendations adopted at each Conference.** Significant progress has been made in this respect by the Chair of the Fifth Conference. However, the implementation process of the decisions taken at each Conference needs to be strengthened and broadened in scope and substance. It is expected that a more effective follow-up to the Sixth Conference will be a major issue for discussion at the Conference in 2006.

34. **Another issue of interest at the Sixth Conference might be the coordination between the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and other global and regional intergovernmental democracy movements or organizations, including the Community of Democracies.** Their complementarity and distribution of labour will also be one of the issues to be discussed in Doha. The Ulaanbaatar Conference already urged the President of the Conference to initiate discussions with the Chair of the Community of Democracies on ways of bringing the two movements closer together, in a complementary manner.

35. I have already briefly discussed how the establishment of the Democracy Fund will bring more coherence and direction to the United Nations system's increasing efforts to provide assistance to countries struggling to enhance their still fragile democratic institutions and processes. **To advance these issues even further, I plan to ask relevant United Nations entities to initiate a study on the comparative advantages, complementarity and desirable distribution of labour of various intergovernmental democracy movements, organizations and institutes, whether global or regional, and on how the United Nations system has worked and could further work with them in a mutually supportive way. The results of the study could be discussed in Doha.**

36. **The next discussion by the General Assembly of the item on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies will be held at the sixty-second session, in late 2007. This will provide a good opportunity to have a full exchange of views based on the above-mentioned study and on the results of the Conference in Doha and other relevant conferences and workshops and to decide on substantive and institutional measures needed to expand the assistance**

programmes of the United Nations system in this area. I call upon the General Assembly to come to a decision, taking into account all financial implications, on how to strengthen United Nations support to the Chair of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and United Nations cooperation with relevant movements and organizations to make their increasingly important work in this area more effective and fully complementary in nature.